New Life for a Symbol of Renewal

Celebrated for its elegant cherry trees, authentic teahouse, and inviting garden spaces, the Japanese Garden continues to blossom thanks to people who are passionate about this cultural gem.
EXPLORE THE GARDENS

SUMMER CAMPS 2020

Our weeklong half- and full-day camps for age 4 through rising 6th grade promote creativity and the joy of discovery through fun learning experiences in the unmatched natural setting of Birmingham Botanical Gardens. All camps will include daily explorations of the Gardens, a keepsake T-shirt, and plants to take home and grow. To register or learn more, visit bbgardens.org/summercamps or call 205.414.3950.

Morning Camps: $160 Friends* | $200 Non-Members
All-Day Camps: $280 Friends* | $350 Non-Members
*Members at the Family level and above are eligible for discounted rates.

Reggio Emilia & STEAM-Inspired Creativity NEW THIS YEAR!
(Grades 5K–2)
May 26–29 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Young Artists in the Gardens
(Ages 4–5)
(Grades 1–3)
June 1–5 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Summer Garden Chefs
(Ages 4–5)
(Grades 5K–2) SOLD OUT
(Grades 3–6)
June 15–19 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Summer Garden Chefs: World-Class Chefs NEW THIS YEAR!
(Grades 4–5)
(Grades 5K–2) SOLD OUT
(Grades 3–6)
June 22–26 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Japanese Garden Exploration
(Ages 4–5) NEW FOR THIS AGE GROUP!
(Grades 5K–2)
July 6–10 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

Little Seeds: Growing Little Gardeners
(Grades 5K–2)
July 13–17 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Tropical Garden Chefs: A Conservatory Adventure
(Grades 3–6)
July 13–17 | 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Little Seeds: Gardening for Wildlife NEW THIS YEAR!
(Grades 5K–2)
July 20–24 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Junior Master Gardeners
(Ages 8–12)
July 20–24 | 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Spa Camp SOLD OUT
(Grades 5K–4)
July 20–24 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

Summer Garden Explorers: Let’s Build a Birdhouse and Take a Bird to Lunch NEW THIS YEAR!
(Grades 3–6)
July 6–10 | 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

Our Mission
The Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens seeks to protect, nurture, and share the wonders of Birmingham Botanical Gardens. We are dedicated to serving the Gardens, serving the community, serving our visitors, and inspiring a passion for plants, gardens, and the environment.

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A facility of the Birmingham Park and Recreation Board, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens is the result of a successful public/private partnership between the City of Birmingham and the nonprofit Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens, a mission-driven membership organization that seeks to protect, nurture, and share the wonders of the Gardens. We hope you will enjoy this issue of the Friends’ quarterly newsletter. Thank you for visiting and supporting the Gardens!

Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens practices a policy of equal opportunity and equal access to services for all persons regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, orientation, or sex identity.
Dear Friend,

As spring arrives all around us, there has never been a more important time to recognize what the season signals in our lives. It’s a time to dig in our gardens and grow our green thumbs, a time for spring cleaning, a time to enjoy fresh air and cool days with family and friends. And as we join together with others to keep our communities healthy, it’s a time to honor the people and places most dear to us.

We are excited to share our 2019 Annual Report recognizing the many ways that your Friendship—in the form of membership support, donor contributions, and volunteer service—has impacted the Gardens during the past year. We have much to celebrate and even more to accomplish as we seek to further our mission. All that we achieve is possible because of your commitment to this special place.

This issue of The Garden Dirt also highlights the remarkable renewal that has happened in the Japanese Garden (page 6) thanks to your support and the dedication of those who regularly devote time and energy to this cultural gem. It’s a story of coming together to bring new life to a garden that means so much to so many.

Finally, we hope you enjoy reading about our ongoing work on the restoration and enhancement of the Kaul Wildflower Garden (page 2). Watch for an announcement soon about a new date for our Annual Member Celebration, when noted landscape architect and Birmingham native Thomas Rainer will join us to share insights into what sets this distinctive garden space apart.

You are dear to us. We thank you for your involvement, your generosity, your Friendship.

Tom Underwood
Executive Director
Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens

COMING SOON!

ANNUAL MEMBER CELEBRATION

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR 2020 MEMBER CELEBRATION

This year we feature Thomas Rainer, internationally acclaimed landscape architect who is helping guide the renovation and future enhancements of the Kaul Wildflower Garden (Turn the page to learn more!)

EVENT HAS BEEN POSTPONED
NEW DATE WILL BE ANNOUNCED
(ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 2)

COST: FREE (MEMBERS), $15 (NON-MEMBERS)

BBGARDENS.ORG/MEMBERCELEBRATION

Thomas Rainer, a leading voice in ecological landscape design, will talk about his landscape philosophy and how it applies both to homeowners’ gardens and to the Kaul Wildflower Garden.

The Birmingham native, a principal with Phyto Studio in Washington, D.C., has designed landscapes for the U.S. Capitol grounds, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and The New York Botanical Garden. He has been featured in numerous publications, including The New York Times, Landscape Architecture Magazine, The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, and Architectural Digest. His recent work focuses on the artful interpretation of wild plant communities into designed plantings that thrive in the context of towns and cities.

A Note About the Gardens and Spring Events & Classes

On March 16, the Birmingham Park and Recreation Board voted to close its facilities, including Birmingham Botanical Gardens, with an unspecified date for reopening in an effort to help prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). As we strive to do our part to keep our community healthy during this public health state of emergency, the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens has decided to cancel or postpone programs, events, and activities scheduled through April 30. This includes our Annual Member Celebration, Earth Day at the Gardens, and our Spring Plant Sale. Calendar listings after April 30 are under review and subject to change. Please see our website, e-newsletter, and social media channels for updates. We extend our sincere hopes for the good health and well-being of the entire community.
A Growing Friendship

With guidance from noted landscape architect and Birmingham native Thomas Rainer, a new vision for the Kaul Wildflower Garden honors the garden’s rich history and exceptional native plant collection. By MOLLY HENDRY

THE BEST GARDENS ARE LIKE TRUSTED friends. In friendship there are rhythms you come to expect, the comfort of the known. But there is also the spark of possibility, a forward-looking vision toward what is to come. Friendship does not happen in a moment but is forged through a series of experiences, the richness multiplied by that sweet layer of time.

One of my most trusted garden comrades is the Kaul Wildflower Garden at the Gardens’ northern tip. Its rock outcroppings are the backbone against which the layers of the seasons ebb and flow. Day by day its structure is steady, yet its collection is always a newfound delight.

The garden and I were acquaintances when I was a little girl growing up in Birmingham, just brief meetings when my mom would herd my sisters and me up to its rocky ledges with picnic lunch in tow. Just two years ago our paths crossed again. I saw the garden with new eyes, realizing that what I had assumed as a child was wild and untamed was instead meticulously crafted and very purposeful.

As with many friends, you learn a lot about them by understanding the people who have been a part of their story. The first chapter of the Kaul Wildflower Garden begins in the early 1960s with a band of women led by the gusto of Bobbe Kaul, eager to create a space at the Gardens that celebrates the diverse native flora of Alabama. An old sandstone rock quarry, abandoned shortly after the Great Depression and overgrown with honeysuckle and Japanese privet, was identified as a prime location. After Mrs. Kaul saw photos of Leonard J. Buck’s private garden in Far Hills, New Jersey, she was determined to have the same designer for Birmingham’s new wildflower garden. So the Swiss-born landscape architect Zenon Schreiber of New York was tapped as the craftsman who would unearth the garden from the rubble of the old quarry.

Schreiber began work in February 1966, initiating a decade-long endeavor that created the garden’s structural framework. Instead of drawing up fancy plans, he would come to Birmingham for three to four weeks at a time and direct the garden’s construction on-site. He was often in the creek determining the placement of stone or scaling the slopes of the garden to ensure the proper alignment of the path. Schreiber’s genius was in his ability to meet the natural qualities of a site with a designer’s kiss. He did not apply a heavy hand to the land but drew out of the wilderness what was inherently there, revealing a garden that was a resounding echo of its context.

It has been over 50 years since Schreiber was working in Kaul, yet the garden is still in motion. The collection that Bobbe Kaul initiated, filled with many plants saved from the ravages of development, is now in the care of Kaul Wildflower Garden Curator John Manion, whose passion for native plants is contagious. Over the past 10 years, John has doubled the number of native species to 900, an enviable diversity of its collection rivals that of any garden in the United States.” —landscape architect Thomas Rainer

“The Kaul Wildflower Garden is rich with topographic and spatial diversity, providing a variety of habitats to show native plants in their best light. The diversity of its collection...

Photos by Graham Yelton, Mindy Keyes Black, and Molly Hendry.
OPPOSITE: John Manion, Kaul Wildflower Garden Curator, leads the visioning team in a tour of Kaul’s spring gems with Thomas Rainer and Emilie Carter of the Phyto Studio and Molly Hendry of the Friends. ABOVE: The creek, which runs along the western side of Kaul, is the showpiece of Schreiber’s handiwork. It’s hard to tell which stones were placed by nature and which were crafted by him. LEFT: Mountain laurel (Kalmia latifolia), a structural evergreen through most of the year, bursts into soft pink blooms in spring. RIGHT, TOP TO Bottom: White top pitcher plant (Sarracenia leucophylla), oakleaf hydrangea (Hydrangea quercifolia), bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis), Indian pink (Spigelia marilandica), trout lily (Erythronium americanum), columbine (Aquilegia canadensis)
number for those in colder regions of the Eastern U.S. This enthusiasm has spilled out beyond the garden into an array of volunteer opportunities and educational classes. In 2019, over 1,000 volunteer hours of work were completed by a core team of volunteers. More than 70 students have completed the Certificate in Native Plant Studies, and our Native Plant propagation group grows a large percentage of the native plants available at our annual plant sales on-site. The garden is also outward-facing, inspiring many field trips to the native habitats that Kaul celebrates.

The rich history of Kaul coupled with the zeal surrounding native plants has the garden poised for dynamic development into the future. In the spring of 2019, internationally known landscape architect (and Birmingham native) Thomas Rainer of Phyto Studio in Washington, D.C., was invited to spend a day and a half conducting a visioning workshop for the garden. Much of the spatial composition that Schreiber worked within has changed over the decades as trees have been lost, the collection has diversified, shrubs have matured, and surrounding areas have been developed. The outcome of the workshop was a report that provides guiding principles for Kaul’s future development and divides the garden into 12 distinct zones, each with its own spatial identity, unified palette of plants, and an understanding of its desired ecological trajectory. The goal for each zone is to distill the patterns and species to evoke a single wild reference point, with sweeps of successive color that draw visitors into the depths of the garden.

The question we strive to answer echoes that of Bobbe Kaul and her wildflower comrades: How can the Kaul Wildflower Garden inspire next generations to steward Alabama’s natural treasures?

I believe the answer is held within its little moments, the ones that take you from a mere acquaintance to a deeper friendship, season after season. The first bloodroot appearing at the tail end of winter. Trout lilies and trillium cascading down the sides of the creek. Wild geraniums billowing against the coarse rocks. Dogwood blooms reaching out from the edge of the woodland. Morning light catching the dew on mayapples carpeting the forest floor. Woodland phlox rippling along the edge of paths. Craggy mountain laurel bursting into blooming clusters. Delicate maidenhair ferns emerging after the spring rains subside. The coolness of the bubbling creek contrasted with the hot hum of insects in the meadow in summer. Crisp fall days when our attention lifts back up to the trees and their fiery glory. By the time the peaceful quiet of winter descends, we are left in eager anticipation of those first bloodroot blooms to signal the start of nature’s thrilling dance again.

It isn’t any single moment that makes Kaul a mighty force. It’s all those little moments knitted together, growing a friendship that we hope will bloom in succeeding generations, inspiring them to protect and nurture these wonders that we hold so dear.

WILD ABOUT WILDFLOWERS?

Join us in May for these two special, wildflower-themed events hosted by the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens Junior Board! Proceeds benefit the Friends’ Kaul Wildflower Garden Internship Program.

COCKTAILS GONE WILD: CRAFTING DELICIOUS LIBATIONS FROM GARDENS AND THE WILD

Using ingredients commonly found in home gardens and in the wild, you’ll learn what to grow to enhance your favorite cocktail recipes. Sponsored by Brick & Tin, the class will include instruction on making shrubs, bitters, and other botanical concoctions and tasty takeaways. Led by John Manion, Kaul Wildflower Garden Curator with the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens, and Joshua Kelly, Manager of Brick & Tin Mountain Brook.

For ages 21 and up.
Sunday, May 3 | 3:30–6:30 p.m.
Brick & Tin Mountain Brook
Tickets: $60 (Members) | $70 (Non-members)
bbgardens.org/classes

A WALK ON THE WILD(FLOWER) SIDE

Enjoy a reception and a guided tour of the Kaul Wildflower Garden to discover the rare and native plants that set this garden apart. Tickets include reception and tour.
Thursday, May 28 | 5:30–7 p.m.
Kaul Wildflower Garden
Tickets: $30 (Members) | $35 (Non-members)
bbgardens.org/wildflower

Swamp sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius), a late-season favorite for all our guests
AROUND THE GARDENS

Wondrous Wildflowers

The Kaul Wildflower Garden is home to 900 species of native plants. Here are six of our favorites and what we love about them.

By MOLLY HENDRY

1. **What it is**: Piedmont azalea
   *(Rhododendron canescens)*
   **What we love about it**: One of our first native azaleas to bloom in spring. You might smell its sweet, lemony perfume before you see its soft pink blooms.
   **Where to find it**: Main entrance to the Kaul Wildflower Garden, across from the gazebo

2. **What it is**: Fringe tree
   *(Chionanthus virginicus)*
   **What we love about it**: Drooping, white flowers create a hazy white haze on this small understory tree in the spring garden.
   **Where to find it**: Along the western stream bank

3. **What it is**: Northern maidenhair fern
   *(Adiantum pedatum)*
   **What we love about it**: The lushness of their delicate fronds that contrast with their dark, wiry stems, bringing vibrancy to moist, shady stream banks.
   **Where to find it**: Along the western stream bank

4. **What it is**: Golden Alexander
   *(Zizia aurea)*
   **What we love about it**: The fine texture of its buttery yellow flower clusters. A member of the carrot family, this hardworking native boasts a long bloom season.
   **Where to find it**: Along western rock terraces

5. **What it is**: Mountain laurel
   *(Kalmia latifolia)*
   **What we love about it**: At the end of spring, light pink buds burst into creamy clusters that are highlighted by the backdrop of glossy green foliage on gnarled, twisting branches.
   **Where to find it**: Lining the upper path overlook

6. **What it is**: Mayapple
   *(Podophyllum peltatum)*
   **What we love about it**: The singular white flower hidden under the enveloping umbrella leaves, which create a glossy green mat on the woodland floor in spring.
   **Where to find it**: Western forest slope

PLANT THE SEEDS

Cultivate your own wildflower garden by joining the Library at the Gardens’ free Seed Exchange program! Harkening back to a tradition shared by Southern gardeners of years past, the program celebrates the communal act of seed saving. “Our great-grandparents would take cuttings and bring them to their neighbors,” says Director of Library Services Hope Long.

“They would share seeds from their gardens. It has almost become a lost art, but this exchange encourages us to start again.”

Not only does the practice inspire a culture of sharing, but also it promotes biodiversity through the exchange of locally adapted plant varieties. Seeds are open-pollinated, which means they result from natural pollination of the parent plant. Choose from open-pollinated vegetable, fruit, herb, and flower seeds, including golden Alexander *(Zizia aurea)* and a number of other seeds harvested from the Kaul Wildflower Garden, then close the loop and bring us back seeds from your own garden!

—Jamie Haas
Most Tuesday mornings, regardless of forecast or temperature, the Japanese Garden hums with activity as a hardworking band of 10 to 12 men and women who are enamored with the space come together to tackle tasks from pulling privet and planting crabapples to cleaning the teahouse and replacing aging wood on bridges and gates.

Some have devoted their Tuesdays to the garden for more than a decade. Others came recently to the group (once known as “the Docs” because of its founding members’ educational pedigrees) because of their shared interest in Japanese culture and gardening. Skilled in everything from horticulture and carpentry to the art of Japanese tea ceremonies, all work diligently to support Adam Benjamin, the City of Birmingham gardener who cares for the 7.5-acre garden, and to give back to a place that, for them and many others, embodies the promise of friendship and continual renewal.

“It’s exciting to see what’s happening here,” says Neal Schooley, one of the group’s original Docs who has helped paint and make repairs to the garden’s bridges. He began volunteering in the garden in 2014 as part of the 50-hour service component of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s Master Gardener program. While he completed his 50 hours in a matter of months, the Tuesday morning routine became habit. “I see friends walking here and meet people visiting from out of town, and I recommend the garden to people all the time. It is a great place, and I’m happy to see that it is getting care and attention. I also enjoy learning about gardening from other members of the group, who know a lot. The relationship among the volunteers is a big part of what keeps me coming back.”

“Things just tend to happen in this garden when there is a need,” says D.C. Coston, who joined the Docs three years ago after retiring from a new life for a symbol of renewal

By MINDY KEYES BLACK

pedestrians) whose new life for a symbol of renewal is for a symbol of renewal.

Shadow of Japanese maple on garden wall

Blue heron

By MINDY KEYES BLACK

The curved-top torii, or “gate to heaven,” welcomes visitors at the garden’s entrance.
Cherry blossoms in bloom
career dedicated to higher education and extension education. Now also an active member of the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens Board of Directors, D.C. thinks of recent renewal efforts almost like the tuning on a radio. "The first few years were coarse tuning. A big part of what we were doing was actually discovery. Now we've moved on to the fine-tuning piece, which has been fun to see and be a part of."

"What has happened is that the people who have joined the group have all caught the spirit that we want this garden to look better and better," says John Floyd, former editor in chief of Southern Living magazine, a Friends Trustee, and another of the volunteer group's original Docs. "We continue to edit what we have all the time. But we're not just taking out privet or picking up leaves—we're working together to refine the garden and plan for its future."

Designed by Masaji "Buffy" Morai, the Japanese Garden has been one of Birmingham Botanical Gardens' most popular features since it was opened in 1967 by the Japanese Ambassador to the United States. A collection of gardens, it features traditional Japanese architectural elements such as the spectacular, curved-top torii, or "gate to heaven," at the garden's entrance; the arched red Fulfillment Bridge, or Moon Bridge, over Long Life Lake; and the 16th-century, Sukiya-style teahouse, Toshinan, built by noted Japanese temple and shrine builder Kazunori Tago using authentic tools, techniques, and materials. Designated a Japanese Cultural Center by the Japanese government in 1993, the space also features traditional garden elements, such as its Bamboo Grove, its growing collection of momiji (Japanese maples), and the Kayser Cherry Walk's graceful Yoshino cherries, several of which were propagated from the famed Yoshinos lining the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C.

**Change of Pace**

When Adam Benjamin was assigned to care for the Japanese Garden in 2013, the garden had not had the benefit of a dedicated City gardener for three years. As he got to know its history and cultural significance with the help of John Floyd; two other original Docs, Mike Rushing and the late Bob Wendorf; and longtime teahouse volunteer Ritsuko Asano, he quickly grew to love the garden, which he feels highlights not just plantings but "the experience of spatial orientations," Adam says.

"There is a huge rock in the middle of the entrance path," he says. "It looks like a roadblock; many people aren't sure what to do when they reach it or why it's there at all. The original designer placed it there as an indication that it's time to stop and look around. What do you see and hear? What is happening around you? I believe that's what gardens, at their best, are: invitations to slow down. To unplug and figure out who you are again."

Confronted initially with a key water feature in need of repair and plant "overgrowth everywhere," Adam and the Tuesday volunteer team soon took on the task of reviving the garden's sights and sounds. They removed the fast-spreading reed (cane) bamboo leaning heavily against the teahouse and eclipsing the lotus pool just behind it. They repurposed the former bonsai house for courtyard gardens, known as tsu- niwa. "We would love one day to turn this spot into an informational center for educating visitors about Japanese culture and elements throughout the garden," Adam says. He and the Docs attended a hands-on workshop hosted
Japanese Garden Lantern Party
TUESDAY, JUNE 2   |   6–8 P.M.

Experience the Japanese Garden anew by the light of its eight authentic lanterns. Join the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens for this special twilight, lantern-lit stroll through the garden. Attendees will have a chance to sample Japanese finger foods and sake and to enjoy traditional Japanese tea served by members of the Chado Urasenke Tankokai Birmingham Association. Japanese Garden artifacts will be on display. Live music will be performed on the koto, a Japanese stringed instrument, and the flute by Laurie and Koji Arizumi, instructors of Japanese at the University of Alabama.

Cost is $75 for members of the Friends and $100 for non-members. Golf cart shuttle service will be available to and from the parking lot. Proceeds benefit the stewardship and enhancement of the Japanese Garden.

Tickets available at bbgardens.org/lantern
“Working in the serene Japanese Garden provides a clean break from miscellaneous self-imposed everyday tasks. It is very meditative.”

—Ritsuko Asano, third-generation Japanese tea instructor who volunteers time each Tuesday to care for the garden’s teahouse and tea garden.
by the Aesthetic Pruning Association at Duke University as they set out to hone their pruning skills for the garden.

A handful of private donors came together to purchase a new pump for the long-silent Seven Virtues Waterfalls. When an additional hurdle—a Volkswagen Beetle-size hole in the garden’s streambed—prevented the pumped water from reaching its destination, the Friends’ Director of Operations, Jane Underwood, brought in Parrot Structural Services to fill the hole with three pallets of grout to get the signature water feature back up and running. “This one change made such a difference,” says Adam. “You lose a lot of the traffic noise, so flowing water completely changes how you experience the garden.”

“When I started here, I had never seen the stream running,” says Mike Rushing, who began volunteering in the garden in 2008. “Now it’s truly the garden’s centerpiece.”

The garden’s rebirth continues. Last spring, donations and member support made possible the partial restoration of the shoreline of Long Life Lake. Since the lake’s creation in the 1960s, silt deposits from runoff and organic matter had raised the water level by 12 to 18 inches, deteriorating edges of the lake and hiding original rock features such as Turtle Rock and Four Seasons Island. The Friends engaged Alabama Aquarium and Pool Services to dredge an estimated 32,000 cubic feet of silt (equal to about 4,740 standard hay bales) from the bottom of the lake using specially designed geotextile bags, returning the lake to its original level and slowing the erosion of the lake’s banks.

**Fresh Look**

Diving into information and photos preserved in the archives at the Library at the Gardens, Adam has continued to “uncover its bones and the reasoning behind its design.” Professional development support from the Friends and the City allowed him to attend two seminars hosted by the International Japanese Garden Training Center at Portland Japanese Garden—considered one of the nation’s preeminent Japanese gardens—in Portland, Oregon. Here he learned traditional Japanese landscaping methods and returned with a host of ideas, including the reimagining of the karesansui (dry landscape) garden.

“IT bothered me that people went up to it, glanced at it, and walked away,” he says. “That’s not what this space is supposed to be. It’s a place for meditation and reflection. Many Japanese gardens incorporate moss into their dry gardens, but moss that was originally in the garden didn’t do well here, so with the help of the Tuesday group, I added zoysia and other plant material back into that garden for more interest. They’re important because they give your eyes a place to rest.”

Major gifts from Protective Life Corporation with additional funding from the CS Beatty Family Foundation in memory of Craig Shipley Beatty, Jr., paved the way for a new elevated boardwalk and education platform, which opened in early March. Constructed using 66 helical piers necessitated by the unique soil conditions, the boardwalk and platform allow visitors to explore the heart of the Bamboo Grove while also protecting the 34 species of bamboo growing there.

“The new elevated boardwalk through the bamboo stand is a fantastic addition,” says Tuesday morning regular Ross Callaway, who has been working with Adam on the karesansui renewal. “The walkway beckons you to enter the forest of bamboo—an enchanted path. We volunteers have concluded that this will be a new destination point for visitors. It offers views of two of the garden’s large stone lanterns and will be a shady place on hot summer days.”

The granite lanterns, gifts from Hitachi City, one of Birmingham’s two sister cities in Japan, include Kasuga doro lantern stand and Bamboo shoot.
The 3-ton, 6-foot-high Yukimi doro, or snow-viewing lantern, and the 5-ton, 12-foot-high Kasuga doro. Formerly standing near the intersection of Cahaba and Lane Park Roads (once considered Birmingham’s southernmost limit), the Kasuga doro was relocated to its new home in the Bamboo Grove in 2017. The surrounding landscaping, created by the Tuesday morning volunteer group, memorializes founding “Doc” Bob Wendorf, who passed away in 2018.

New Life
To Adam, much of the garden’s recent renewal has reflected a return to Morai’s original intent for the garden. “My main goal is to get it back to the original concept, and then build on that,” he says. “I’m trying to take it from where we are now to a more accessible garden and a more intricate garden—a garden that reflects the Japanese design concept of conceal-and-reveal. We want to make it a place where you don’t just walk through and keep going but instead slow down and notice the change of the seasons. Around every corner: a whole new vista.”

Building on this concept, a recent gift from ITOCHU Coal Americas Inc. will soon be used toward another new addition: an authentic “spirit lantern” that once stood in a private garden in Nagoya, Japan. The lantern was carved from red kurama granite, a rare stone from iron-rich hills north of Kyoto. When completed, the lantern installation and landscaping will add another conceal-and-reveal view of Long Life Lake from a berm, or mound, on one of the garden’s main paths.

The renewal also highlights the impact of volunteers at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, he points out. “At Portland Japanese Garden, which is very close to the size of our Japanese Garden, 12 gardeners and 200 volunteers are taking care of that 7.5-acre space. I’m the only gardener for our Japanese Garden, and I have 3.5 other acres under my care here, so our Tuesday morning team and other student and corporate volunteer groups make a huge difference.”

The list of the garden’s pressing needs continues, from addressing flooding around the karesansui to the major projects of carrying out a much-needed renovation of the teahouse and regrading the garden’s paths for greater accessibility and drainage solutions. The Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens stands ready to help Adam and his dedicated volunteer team accomplish the vision for these next phases of renewal.

“It’s really very exciting to be a part of,” says Mike Rushing. “We’ve come so far—now it’s all about refining. It’s as if when we started, the garden was background noise, but now, it is picking out a melody. The garden is developing.”

“Getting the water working was absolutely transformational, and now with the beautiful bamboo walk, we’re adding delightful features and getting a garden that to me is more respectable every day,” says John Floyd. “The meticulous way things are being done, the relationship that we the volunteers have with Adam, and the empowerment that we feel with the support for our work coming from the Friends staff and Board—it’s really a successful model that I’d like to see as a model for every garden here.”

Meet Norm
From leading tours and pruning junipers to sharing his favorite recipe for koi food, volunteer Norm Geisinger brings the Japanese Garden to life for visitors of all ages. Enjoy our recent video chat with Norm at bbgardens.org/blog.

Volunteer with us! Email volunteer@bbgardens.org to learn more.
DID YOU KNOW?

10 fun facts about the Japanese Garden

1. The garden was officially opened in 1967 by the Japanese Ambassador to the United States.

2. Traditionally each spring, the Japan-America Society of Alabama hosts a Sakura, or cherry blossom, Festival at the Gardens to celebrate the garden’s cherry trees in bloom. In Japanese culture, sakura symbolize the beauty and ephemerality of life.

3. The garden’s growing collection of 94 momiji, or Japanese maples—some dating back to the opening of the Gardens in 1962—includes 46 named cultivars.

4. On Monday evenings in spring and summer, the Moore Japanese Cultural Pavilion, which was based on the design of a rural Japanese theater, provides a picturesque, open-air site for the Friends’ Evening Ashtanga Yoga in the Gardens classes.

5. The Seven Virtues Waterfalls consists of seven waterfalls and seven pools that flow through the Hill and Stream Garden before emptying into Long Life Lake. The name is based on the seven virtues of Bushido, the way of the samurai: benevolence, courage, honesty, honor, loyalty, rectitude, and respect.

6. The Bridge of Accomplishment, or “zigzag bridge,” symbolizes the twists and turns that people must navigate in life. Cutouts in the cedar panels are important Japanese cultural symbols, including fans, cherry and chrysanthemum blossoms, and the leaves of bamboo and Japanese maple.

7. The garden is home to eight Japanese lanterns. Two granite welcome lanterns, the Kasuga doro and the Yukimi doro, were a gift from Hitachi City, one of Birmingham’s two sister cities in Japan. (The second sister city is Maebashi.)

8. Several of the Yoshino cherry trees growing along the Kayser Cherry Walk were propagated from the famous Yoshinos along the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. They were presented to the Gardens to mark the 100th anniversary of the original gift from the people of Japan.

9. In 1993, the Japanese government designated the teahouse, pavilion, and surrounding areas in the garden an official Japanese cultural center.

10. The garden’s teahouse, Toshinan, is a 16th-century, Sukiya-style teahouse that was constructed in 1993 by master builder Kazunori Tago using traditional tools and techniques and materials brought from Japan. The name Toshinan means “the house where those gathered can light a wick [of understanding] in one another’s hearts.”
Your Membership Keeps the Gardens Growing

ANNOUNCING STREAMLINED LEVELS AND ENHANCED BENEFITS FOR 2020!

We are excited to announce our seven membership levels and newly enhanced member benefits for 2020. Levels include Friend ($50), Dual ($55), Family ($70), Contributor ($150), Supporter ($250), Ambassador ($500), and Benefactor Circle ($1,000+).

We hope you enjoy your newly enhanced member benefits, including

- Discounts and Priority Registration for Select Classes and Events
- 10% off at Leaf & Petal at the Gardens, the Gardens Cafe by Kathy G, and (new this year!) Participating Nurseries and Garden Shops, including Botanica, Dorothy McDaniel's Flower Market, Myers Plants & Pottery, Petals from the Past, SHOPPE: Birmingham, and Sweet Peas Garden Shop (certain exclusions apply; visit bbgardens.org/benefits to learn more)
- Admission to our Spring Plant Sale Members-only Sale
- Free or Reduced Admission at 300+ gardens across North America
- And so much more! Learn more at bbgardens.org/membership.

If you joined or last renewed prior to February 26, 2020, your same benefits, as well as newly added benefits, will be honored throughout your membership. To take advantage of your member benefits online, create your member log-in on our home page. Applicable member discounts will appear in your cart. You’ll note that we have simplified our options and changed the names of several of our membership categories in response to member feedback.

Thank you for your commitment to the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens! Now through May 31: receive 10% off a personal or gift membership! Enter discount code SPRING2020 when making your purchase at bbgardens.org/membership.
Thank You

WE ARE GRATEFUL for the many ways that you show your support of the Friends throughout the year! Your annual membership, contributions, and volunteer service are critical to our success.

Starting with this issue of *The Garden Dirt*, we will transition to recognizing the generosity of lead donors, sponsors, individuals in our Perennial Legacy Giving Circle, and members once a year, in our newly redesigned annual report. We will continue to recognize your honorariums and memorial gifts quarterly—thank you for honoring friends, colleagues, and loved ones through these meaningful tributes. We hope you enjoy our new annual report!

As a friend of the Gardens, you join with others who treasure both the natural world and the Gardens’ important role in our community. Thank you for helping us keep Birmingham Botanical Gardens special.

—Penney Hartline, Director of Development

A new tea garden gate was installed at the entrance to the Japanese Garden's tea garden. The gate was given by Mr. and Mrs. Kirk Mancer in memory of Mary E. and Richard B. Mancer. The structure, based on the garden's previous tea garden gate, now serves as the new threshold to the tea garden from the View-Receiving Bridge.

HONORARIUMS

October–December 2019

- Barbara Adkins
  The Canterbury Club

- Kathy & Rob Angus
  Drs. Anne & Bruce Cusic

- Ritsuko Asano
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing
  Kim & Fred Spicer

- Judi Aucoin
  Edgewood Garden Club

- Brian D. Barr
  Martha & Chip Grizzle

- Adam Benjamin
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Emily & Bill Bowron
  Margaret Anne & T.O. Smith

- Mr. Hatton C.V. Smith

- Debbie Brantley
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Ross Callaway
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Jean K. Condrey
  Dr. & Mrs. G. William Cole

- D.C. Coston
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- David E. Doggett
  Paula & Mike Rushing

- Gene Donaldson
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- John Floyd
  Mr. & Mrs. Edwin E. Lambert

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Cindy & Craig Fravert
  Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Carter

- A Special Anniversary for Beth & Jim Garner
  Sue & Allan Solomon

- Norm Geisinger
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Molly Hendry
  Cadmean Circle

- Mr. & Mrs. Edwin E. Lambert

- John Kerns
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Robert S. Koons

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Susanne Lambert
  Ms. Rebecca N. Posey

- Jennifer R. McCain
  Mrs. Margaret M. DeBardeleben

- Alice Moore
  Mr. & Mrs. Edwin E. Lambert

- Reta Mudd
  Mr. William A. Mudd & Mrs. Alison W. Nichols

- Nancy C. Natter
  RADM. John T. Natter

- Will Newton
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Kate Newton
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Tricia Noble
  Julia Ann & Marvin Cleage

- Gail & Edward Parrish
  Mr. & Mrs. Mike Parrish

- Carol P. Poyner
  Mrs. Kay Byars

- Mike Rushing
  Dekalb County Master Gardeners

- Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Forest Park Garden Club

- Highland Lakes Garden Club

- Mountaintop Garden Club

- Neal Schooley
  Dr. & Mrs. John Floyd, Jr.

- Paula & Mike Rushing

- Nancy Anne Ward Smith
  Mrs. Donald R. Pritchard

- John Smith T
  Mr. & Mrs. T. Michael Brown

- Tiffany Sutton
  Mr. & Mrs. Edwin E. Lambert

- Mark Thompson
  The Little Garden Club

- Jane Underwood
  Mr. & Mrs. Edwin E. Lambert

MEMORIALS

October–December 2019

- Ann S. Allen
  Mr. & Mrs. William F. Denson III

- Miriam Banks
  Jeanie S. Sherlock

- Rebecca Pinkston Caddell
  Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Collins

- Mary Katherine “Kathy” Connolly
  Mr. & Mrs. Mitchell Cooper

- Dr. & Mrs. Richard S. Cybulsky

- Linda & Charlie Faulkner
  Mr. & Mrs. Henry S. Fowlkes III

- Ms. Mary W. Foy & Mr. John O'Hagan

- Mr. Michael G. Gray
  Ms. Helen I. Kohn

- Mr. Jon Turner & Ms. F. Ruth Luketic

- Mr. & Mrs. Raymond K. Lyrene

- Mr. & Mrs. Joseph V. Musso

- Mrs. Elizabeth G. McKeen

- Mr. & Mrs. Joseph V. Musso

- Mrs. Kay Byars

- Mike Rushing

- Dekalb County Master Gardeners
BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

WENDY EVESQUE
Wendy Evesque is Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Protective Life Corporation. Her role is to oversee the company’s human resources activities, including leadership development, talent acquisition, compensation, benefits, employee relations, and learning and talent development. Wendy joined Protective in March 2005.

Prior to joining Protective Life, Wendy served as Vice President and Human Capital Partner with United Health Group, providing HR support to health plans across the Southern region of the country.

Wendy earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Commerce and Business Administration from the University of Alabama, and a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

JANET F. KAVINOKY
Janet Kavinoky is Vice President, External Affairs and Corporate Communications for Vulcan Materials Company. She is responsible for the community, governmental and regulatory affairs of the corporation, its corporate communications initiatives, as well as the company’s charitable giving and political action committee programs. Before joining Vulcan in September 2015, Janet was executive director for transportation & infrastructure at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Janet began her career at the U.S. Department of Transportation, ultimately serving as a special assistant to the Secretary of Transportation.

Janet earned her bachelor’s degree in Political Economy from the University of Wyoming and an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

JIM PICKLE
Jim Pickle was elected chair of the Friends Junior Board in December 2019, and previously served as Junior Board Secretary. He is an attorney with Maynard, Cooper & Gale, where his work focuses on the areas of mergers and acquisitions, venture capital financings, and corporate governance. Prior to moving to Birmingham, Jim lived in Washington, D.C., and practiced law at DLA Piper. He has lived in a number of cities across the U.S., including New York and Chicago. Jim earned his B.S. and J.D. degrees from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia.

Jim attributes his involvement in the Gardens to his experience in horticulture and his desire to help expand the reach of an iconic Birmingham landmark.

SHARON SHERROD
Sharon Sherrod is a graduate of Birmingham-Southern College. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English Literature and a master’s degree in Management. She retired from a successful 28-year career with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama. Her corporate career afforded her the opportunity to acquire a recognized level of expertise in management, leadership, operations, service, and strategic planning.

Sharon is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and the Tri-County Alabama chapter of The Links, Incorporated. Her active membership in these organizations affords her the opportunity to serve and support educational, charitable, and community service initiatives that benefit those in need locally, nationally, and internationally.

In her leisure, Sharon enjoys spending time with her family and friends, her dog Bentley, reading, traveling, and gardening.
At press time, we and several of our partners have canceled or postponed a number of spring events and classes in response to CDC, local, and state recommendations regarding gatherings of people during the current public health state of emergency. Please visit bbgardens.org, check upcoming e-newsletters, or follow us on social media for updates.

MAY
1 ART AT THE GARDENS: Spring into Color by Angie Ingram (on display through June)
3 COCKTAILS GONE WILD
4 YOGA AT THE GARDENS: Ashtanga
4 EVENING YOGA AT THE GARDENS: Ashtanga
5 THYME TO READ BOOK CLUB: Cork Dork by Bianca Bosker
8–17 NATIONAL PUBLIC GARDENS WEEK
9 FAMILY YOGA IN THE GARDENS
11 YOGA AT THE GARDENS: Ashtanga
11 EVENING YOGA AT THE GARDENS: Ashtanga
16 SATURDAYS IN THE GARDENS: Arrange Flowers Easily
18 YOGA AT THE GARDENS: Ashtanga

18 EVENING YOGA AT THE GARDENS: Ashtanga
20 I FILLED UP MY GARDEN, SO ...
20 I STARTED A BOTANICAL GARDEN!
A Talk by Hayes Jackson of Longleaf Botanical Gardens; hosted by the Birmingham Fern Society
20 LUNCH & LEARN: Say It Isn’t Soil!
26–29 CHILDREN’S SUMMER CAMP: Reggio Emilia & STEAM-Inspired Creativity
28 A WALK ON THE WILD(FLOWER) SIDE

SAVE THESE DATES!
JAPANESE GARDEN LANTERN PARTY | June 2
FLICKS AMONG THE FLOWERS | June 10
FALL PLANT SALE | September 12–13
ANTIQUS AT THE GARDENS | October 1–4

Please Join the Perennial Legacy Giving Circle
INCLUDE THE FRIENDS IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS

PERENNIALS REMIND US that beauty, color, and new life will return, year after year. This spring, you can help ensure that the Gardens will be here for future generations by joining our Perennial Legacy Giving Circle, a group of dedicated and passionate people who have made planned gifts to the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens to help keep our gardens growing.

JOINING IS EASY: Simply designate the Friends as a beneficiary of your estate in your will, charitable trust, or retirement vehicle of your choice. We are grateful to those who have made this special commitment. Please join them in supporting and protecting this beloved community resource. Call Director of Development Penney Hartline at 205.414.3950, ext. 103, to learn more.
With its tranquil reflection, the Japanese Garden’s iconic Moon Bridge beckons visitors to the far side of Long Life Lake. While the arching bridge itself represents the tangible aspects of life, its echo in the water symbolizes the ephemeral world.